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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Wednesday, June 10, 1936

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "THE BARNYARD UNDERWORLD." Information from the Bureau of Animal Industry, United States Department of Agriculture.

--ooOoo--

How about taking a little time off today for a trip to the movies? An imaginary trip, of course, but a real movie, that actually exists in film form. It was prepared by the Bureau of Animal Industry of the U. S. Department of Agriculture, and the film can be borrowed from the Department by any organization that has equipment for showing moving pictures. The title is "The Barnyard Underworld," and it's really a thrilling picture of the undercover enemies that threaten peaceful farm homes in many parts of the country. I have the "script" before me, and from it I will give you the story, just as it unfolds on the screen.

The opening shots introduce the Simmons family, which consists of "Pa," who is a farmer, about 50; "Ma," his wife, who raises chickens as well as the two children, "Tad," and "Anne," who are 15 and 16. There is also Barney, a farm horse, for 10 years a "member" of the Simmons family.

The next few scenes show life on the Simmons farm. Sad to say, when it rains, the roof leaks, the pig pen floods, and a young sick pig has to be brought indoors. It is given a patent "stock tonic." The wife complains that if the stock didn't get sick so often and if stock tonics didn't cost so much, they would have money to fix the roof and buy other things they might enjoy. Other scenes show bad conditions in the barn, the yard, the poultry run, contaminated water in the well, Barney, the horse, with an infected leg sore.

About this time the family's attention is called to a shocking account in the newspaper of an underworld crime. "Pa" congratulates himself that his family lives in the country where there's no need to worry about the underworld.

Then they are all startled by hearing someone say over the radio, "Farms as well as cities have their underworlds, containing countless denizens with parasitic habits." The announcer says, "This is Dr. J. C. Walker of the Bureau of Animal Industry speaking from Washington, D. C." Dr. Walker talks again! He says, "These parasites include worms of wide variety, mites, lice, and deadly bacteria so small we have to use a microscope to see them. There are the tuberculosis bacteria, the typhoid, the anthrax, and others. These creatures live and thrive in such insanitary places as stagnant water, mud, accumulations of manure, in open wounds on the bodies of animals, or within their bodies."

You can imagine how closely the Simmons family was listening to all this. The radio speaker, Dr. Walker, went on:

"These pests torment domestic animals, retard their growth, and increase production costs. Some animal diseases spread to persons. Tuberculosis is one of these. Many human diseases are caused by polluted water supplies from barnyard seepage."

Tad turns to his father and says, "He seems to be talking about us, Dad." The radio goes on:

"The remedy is to raid the haunts of these creatures of the barnyard underworld, to whom you pay such heavy tribute in suffering and money losses. Clean up thoroughly, then disinfect. It's hard to beat good old-fashioned whitewash for hog pens and chicken houses. Burn inflammable trash.

"Whenever possible, make concrete foundations, feeding floors, troughs, walks, septic tanks, and similar improvements that do away with mud, contaminated seepage, and other insanitary conditions.

"Sunlight and ventilation surpass tonics and medicines. Healthy, comfortable animals need no nostrums. The sanitary condition of the farmstead is a practical measure of the owner's love and consideration for his family and his stock."

All the members of the Simmons family except the father are very much impressed. It takes a very sick horse the next day, and a call from the veterinarian, to bring the father around. The veterinarian says, "You nearly let a good horse die, relying on that worthless stock tonic. See that his stall has plenty of clean fresh straw, and don't let him get into any mud or manure." He showed the farmer that the money spent for stock tonic was practically wasted and could have been used better for other purposes.

Needless to say, the story has a happy ending. "Pa" Simmons has been convinced that the way to show his love for his family is to wage war on the insanitary conditions brought about by the denizens of the "barnyard underworld." He attacks the job of cleaning up the barnyard. Eventually he remodels the house and barn, builds a concrete watering trough and dry clean barnyard floor, feeding platform, self-feeder for the hogs, and modern chicken house. Barney has a clean, comfortable home for the rest of his days. Of course this didn't come about magically, all at once, but as the result of good planning and hard persistent work. Even the romantically inclined are satisfied at the end for Anne has invited her boy-friend to visit her on this now modern farmstead.

The point of the plot for most of us is, of course, the fact that there's no need for these underworld creatures -- worms that infest livestock, vermin, or deadly bacteria that affect both animals and humans -- to gain a foothold around farm homes. We must know them for what they are and combat them by fortifying our dwellings against them. Outside in the yard it's usually the responsibility of the men-folk, but if they do not produce results, it's time for the wife and daughter to take some action.

At the same time, we women can't afford to let anything evoke critical comment indoors, can we? We can't permit dark damp corners where insects multiply or mice and rats breed; heaps of inflammable rubbish; moldy food materials or rancid fats stored away; filth-carrying flies in the house. Sweetness and light everywhere, inside the home and out, will discourage the most hardened malefactors in the farmstead underworld.

